

Simplified report on the investigation of the grounding of the pleasure vessel **ISAMAR** Grand écueil d'Olmeto, Corsica 17 August 2013

Extract from The United Kingdom Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 – Regulation 5:

“The sole objective of the investigation of an accident under the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 shall be the prevention of future accidents through the ascertainment of its causes and circumstances. It shall not be the purpose of an such investigation to determine liability nor, except so far as is necessary to achieve its objective, to apportion blame.”

NOTE

This report is not written with litigation in mind and, pursuant to Regulation 14(14) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012, shall be inadmissible in any judicial proceedings whose purpose, or one of whose purposes is to attribute or apportion liability or blame.

© Crown copyright, 2014

You may re-use this document/publication (not including departmental or agency logos) free of charge in any format or medium. You must re-use it accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and you must give the title of the source publication. Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

All reports can be found on our website:

www.maib.gov.uk

For all enquiries:

Email: maib@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 023 8039 5500

Fax: 023 8023 2459

Summary

On the afternoon of 17 August 2013 the 24m, 62gt, privately owned motor yacht *Isamar* struck the Grand écueil d'Olmeto shoal while on passage from Bonifacio, Corsica to Roccapina bay. The three crew were unable to halt the flooding, but were able to abandon the vessel with the eight passengers before *Isamar* foundered in 55m of water.



Figure 1: *Isamar*

Narrative

Isamar left Bonifacio at about 1600 local time. The weather and sea conditions were ideal with calm seas and good visibility, and because of this the master decided not to switch on the radar. The master navigated by eye and monitored the vessel's passage on an ECS¹, which was set on a 6-mile scale. The vessel had no paper charts on board, and the master relied on the ECS to identify land masses and seabed topography. The ECS's electronic charts had not been updated for nearly 10 years. Although the echo sounder was switched on, its shallow water alarm had not been set.

¹ Electronic chart system (ECS), any type of electronic navigation system that does not comply with the International Maritime Organization's requirements for classification as an Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS).

The master was on watch while the mate and stewardess attended to the passengers' needs. After clearing Cap de Feno, he set a north-westerly course at 10.5 knots to pass through the 0.5 mile wide gap between the shoals Grand écueil d'Olmeto and Petit écueil d'Olmeto (**Figure 2**). No waypoints or course lines were set on the ECS.

Reproduced courtesy of Service hydrographique at oceanographique de la marine

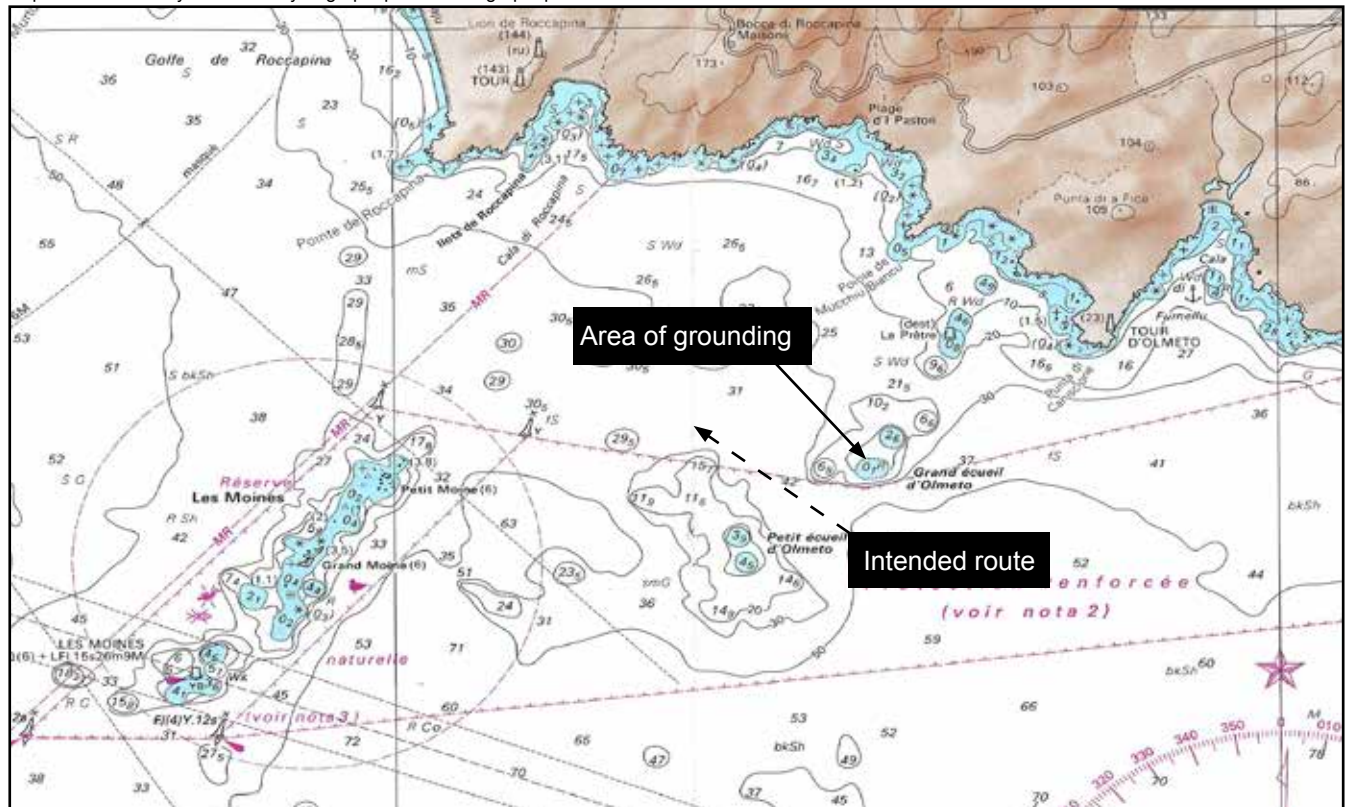


Figure 2: Intended route of *Isamar* on official chart, shoal not readily apparent on *Isamar*'s chart plotter

At about 1730 *Isamar* lurched suddenly. This was followed by violent vibrations and the sounding of the high level bilge alarms for the engine room and lazarette². The mate looked behind the vessel and saw an underwater reef through the clear sea.

The master immediately disengaged *Isamar*'s engines and rushed towards the engine room, which was entered through the lazarette. On descending into the lazarette he found himself thigh deep in water. He passed through the watertight bulkhead door into the engine room, where he found about 0.5m depth of water. He started two bilge pumps and, in an attempt to ensure their efficiency, led a flexible 75mm suction hose from the pump suction chest, directly into the lazarette through the open watertight door.

While the master was below decks, the mate mustered the passengers and instructed them to don their lifejackets. He then checked the vessel's position on the ECS and noted that the display was on quite a large scale. By pushing the scale adjustment button four or five times, he reduced the scale to its minimum setting of 0.5 mile. At this scale, the ECS did show an area of shoal water not apparent on the larger scale. However, it did not display any depth soundings as shown on official hydrographic charts.

Upon his return to the bridge the master transmitted a "Pan Pan" urgency message by radio, which was heard by both the coastguard and vessels in the area.

Isamar settled by the stern and a nearby sailing yacht came close by to assist. As a precaution, the passengers and stewardess were transferred to the yacht by *Isamar*'s tender. The rescue yacht then took the survivors about 3 miles to their intended destination of Roccapina bay where they were transferred ashore. The master and mate remained by *Isamar* on the tender, but in constant communication with rescuers using portable VHF³ radios.

² A vessel's aft store.

³ Very High Frequency (VHF)

Around 1825 Propriano SNSM⁴ lifeboat arrived on scene to find *Isamar* settled by the stern and her forefoot almost 1m out of the water. It was apparent that *Isamar* was beyond saving and that any attempt to put men on board would be hazardous. *Isamar* finally sank in 55m of water about 3 hours later.

A subsequent dive inspection of the wreck showed that *Isamar*'s starboard propeller was intact (**Figure 3**) and that her port propeller and support bracket had been driven through the glass reinforced plastic hull (**Figure 4**) when the vessel struck the shallow reef.



Figure 3: *Isamar*'s starboard propeller and bracket (intact)



Figure 4: *Isamar*'s port propeller and bracket penetrating hull

Personnel

Master: The 60 year old master had spent most of his career on commercial yachts and had been master of *Isamar* for 6 years. He had previously held an STCW II/5 Certificate of Competency, issued under the International Maritime Organization's International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, enabling him to act as master on yachts up to 500gt no further than 150 miles from a safe haven. He also held a Royal Yachting Association Yacht Master qualification.

Mate: The 35 year old mate had been involved with private and commercial yachts for 8 years. He held a Yachtmaster Ocean Certificate of Competency, issued by the UK Royal Yachting Association, which enabled him to act as master on yachts up to 200gt.

Conclusions

1. *Isamar*'s master relied on an ECS with electronic charts that were set to the wrong scale, unsuitable for the intended voyage and out of date as the primary means of navigation. The UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency's Marine Guidance Note (MGN) 379 (M+F) *Navigation: Use of Electronic Navigation Aids* advises: "If an ECS is carried on board, the continuous use of up-to-date paper charts remains essential for safe navigation."
2. Had appropriate, updated charts been available on board, *Isamar*'s master could have prepared a passage plan which would have enabled him to ensure that the intended route was suitable for *Isamar*'s draught. MGN 489 (M) *Pleasure Vessels - UK Regulations* explains, inter alia, the requirements for passage planning.
3. The standard marine emergency procedure of isolating damaged areas by closing watertight doors, were not applied, allowing the vessel to flood and sink faster than would have been the case had the watertight openings been closed. Flooding was not contained by closing the watertight door between the lazarette and the engine room, and pumping capability was not used to best effect. Had the watertight door been closed and the pumps set to pump out the engine room, the vessel would have stayed afloat longer and might have been saved.

⁴ Société nationale de sauvetage en mer, France's national society for sea rescue.

SHIP PARTICULARS

Vessel's name	<i>Isamar</i>
Flag	United Kingdom
Classification society	Not applicable
IMO number/Fishing registration	Not applicable
Type	Private pleasure yacht
Registered owner	Stella Ducet Ltd
Manager(s)	Not applicable
Year of build	2003
Construction	GRP
Length overall	23.97m
Registered length	23.97m
Gross tonnage	61.50
Minimum safe manning	Not applicable
Authorised cargo	Not applicable

VOYAGE PARTICULARS

Port of departure	Bonifacio, Corsica
Intended port of arrival	Poltu Quatu, Sardinia
Type of voyage	Coastal
Manning	Three

MARINE CASUALTY INFORMATION

Date and time	17 August 2013; 1730 (local)
Type of marine casualty or incident	Very Serious Marine Casualty (UK)
Location of incident	Grand écueil d'Olmeto, Corsica
Place on board	Engine room and lazarette
Injuries/fatalities	None
Damage/environmental impact	Foundering with minor pollution
Ship operation	On passage
Voyage segment	Transit
External & internal environment	Wind west-south-westerly force 1 Daylight; visibility good
Persons on board	11